# Selina Scott attack highlights worsening crime crisis in central London



The brazen daylight robbery and assault of veteran broadcaster Selina Scott in Central London has reignited a fierce debate about the rising crime epidemic in the capital. The 74-year-old former ITN News anchor was attacked by an organised gang last week at a busy bus stop on Piccadilly, an area close to some of London's most iconic landmarks like the Ritz and Leicester Square. Despite fighting back and retaining her backpack, Ms Scott was left shocked and traumatised after thieves unzipped her bag and stole her purse containing cash, bank cards, and driving licence.

Ex-Scotland Yard detective Peter Bleksley, known for his role on Channel 4's *Hunted*, condemned the escalating crime situation, branding London a “crime-ridden cesspit”. He highlighted the Metropolitan Police’s overstretched capacity, particularly in central London, where private security firms have been enlisted to help fill policing gaps. Bleksley warned that the city, once a symbol of grandeur and security, has become “plagued” by pickpocketing, robbery, violence, and petty crimes – actively driving people and tourists away. He urged Londoners and visitors to avoid displaying expensive items like mobile phones, watches, or handbags in public areas, especially across the West End, for fear of becoming targets of violent criminals. According to him, such high levels of disorder are unprecedented in his memory, and this deteriorating public safety is fundamentally eroding confidence in the police.

This personal account from Selina Scott starkly highlights a broader trend unfolding across London. Official statistics reveal that nearly one million crimes were recorded city-wide over the last year, with a 2% increase compared to the previous year. Westminster emerges as the epicentre of this surge, accounting for over 91,000 crimes in 2024 alone—more than double the next highest borough. The borough’s numerous tourists, affluent residents, and bustling nightlife make it particularly vulnerable to theft and violence. Theft remains the most common offence, comprising tens of thousands of cases annually, alongside significant numbers of violent and drug-related crimes. Other boroughs like Camden and Kensington and Chelsea also report high crime rates, consistent with their vibrant cultural scenes and appealing lifestyles. At the other end of the spectrum, boroughs such as Richmond upon Thames and Kingston upon Thames boast comparatively low crime rates and remain the safest locales in the capital.

While London grapples with this surge in crime, comparisons with other major cities, both domestic and international, paint a complex picture. For instance, Greater Manchester, despite fewer observed crimes in absolute numbers, records a higher crime rate per capita than London. Notably, police forces in Manchester, under proactive leadership, have achieved an 8% reduction in crime in the last year, contrasting London’s rising trends. Internationally, ex-Detective Bleksley recounted feeling safer during recent visits to European cities like Rome, Milan, Naples, and Krakow—places often stereotyped for criminal underworlds—than he does in London. Part of this perceived security is attributed to higher police numbers; Italy, with a smaller population, fields roughly twice as many law enforcement officers compared to the UK, enabling a more visible and effective presence.

Political leaders have seized upon the incident and statistics to call for immediate reforms and increased funding to the Metropolitan Police. Conservative figures criticized London Mayor Sir Sadiq Khan’s handling of policing, arguing that cuts and funding deficiencies have weakened law enforcement and emboldened criminals. Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp condemned what he described as a culture of impunity among gangs in London and called for a zero-tolerance approach to crime enforcement, including broader use of technologies such as facial recognition. He noted that only a fraction of crimes in London currently lead to prosecution, calling the situation unacceptable. Similarly, Susan Hall, Conservative group leader at City Hall, warned of worsening conditions if police staff reductions proceed as currently planned, urging the mayor to act decisively before further harm occurs.

In response, the Metropolitan Police maintain that despite public frustration, significant numbers of officers patrol crime hotspots in visible and covert capacities daily, focused on apprehending offenders. The Mayor’s office also highlighted previous funding cuts imposed under national government austerity measures, attributing many challenges to this context. Since taking office in 2016, Sir Sadiq Khan asserts he has doubled the investment in policing, aiming to maintain frontline police services and improve community safety. Ongoing estate reforms and commitments to securing sustainable funding are cited as essential for building a safer London, though no easy solutions are presented.

This episode involving Selina Scott crystallises the distressing reality faced by many Londoners and visitors alike amid an environment where crime is escalating, police resources are strained, and public confidence is waning. The city’s reputation as a global capital of culture and commerce risks erosion unless robust, visible, and persistent policing strategies are matched by political will and adequate investment. Until then, the warnings from policing experts and victims alike stand as a stark admonition of the growing risks in what was once considered the world’s most iconic metropolis.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14838367/Selina-Scott-daylight-robbery-London-crime-police-expert.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14838367/Selina-Scott-daylight-robbery-London-crime-police-expert.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/met-police-crime-hotspots-revealed-interactive-map-london-b1224060.html), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/london-boroughs-with-the-highest-number-of-crimes-westminster-camden-kensington-chelsea-b1205022.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14838367/Selina-Scott-daylight-robbery-London-crime-police-expert.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/crime-london-manchester-met-police-sadiq-khan-andy-burnham-b1225552.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14838367/Selina-Scott-daylight-robbery-London-crime-police-expert.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/met-police-crime-hotspots-revealed-interactive-map-london-b1224060.html), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/london-boroughs-with-the-highest-number-of-crimes-westminster-camden-kensington-chelsea-b1205022.html), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/crime-london-manchester-met-police-sadiq-khan-andy-burnham-b1225552.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14838367/Selina-Scott-daylight-robbery-London-crime-police-expert.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14838367/Selina-Scott-daylight-robbery-London-crime-police-expert.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/met-police-crime-hotspots-revealed-interactive-map-london-b1224060.html), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/london-boroughs-lowest-crime-rates-richmond-kingston-sutton-merton-b1206311.html)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14838367/Selina-Scott-daylight-robbery-London-crime-police-expert.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14838367/Selina-Scott-daylight-robbery-London-crime-police-expert.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14838367/Selina-Scott-daylight-robbery-London-crime-police-expert.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/met-police-crime-hotspots-revealed-interactive-map-london-b1224060.html> - An interactive map reveals London's crime hotspots as the Metropolitan Police prepares to cut 1,700 officers and staff. Figures published by the Office for National Statistics highlight the harsh reality of 'substantial tough choices' facing Scotland Yard Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley’s 'rapidly shrinking' force. Around 957,481 crimes were recorded across London in the 12 months to December 2024, a rise of two per cent on the year before. Westminster had the highest number with 91,380, more than double that of the nearest densely populated borough of Camden (42,569), Newham (39,990), Southwark (39,500), Lambeth (38,116) and Croydon (35,374). Kingston upon Thames (11,244) had the lowest number of offences recorded in the year up to 2024, followed by Richmond upon Thames (12,065) and Sutton (13,024). Hundreds of thousands of crimes committed included theft, violence, vehicle theft, drugs, public order, burglary, robbery and sexual offences. Almost a third of knife crime in England and Wales happens in London with an incident every 30 minutes, according to shock official figures released on Thursday. The Met recorded 16,789 offences involving a bladed weapon in 2024 – around 46 a day, the ONS said. The figures show that shoplifting in particular has exploded in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic. Offences have more than doubled from 38,768 in 2022 to 89,821 in 2024. The Met’s £260 million budget shortfall has already led to the axing of 371 safer schools officers transferred into neighbourhood policing teams from May. Amid an epidemic of violent crime, mobile phone snatches and shoplifting across London, senior officers disbanded units protecting eight Royal Parks, despite fierce opposition from councils and victims. Retired Chief Superintendent Simon Ovens, a former Met borough commander, warned the force could soon be overwhelmed by a tidal wave of offending with a million reports a year.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/london-boroughs-with-the-highest-number-of-crimes-westminster-camden-kensington-chelsea-b1205022.html> - Crime statistics released by the Metropolitan police have been used to determine which London boroughs have the highest crime rates. The data covers all types of crime recorded from January 2021 to December 2024. From 2021 across London crime increased. This is possibly due to the pandemic and its associated constraints. Here is a list of the London boroughs with the highest number of crimes over that period. Westminster’s numerous tourists, busy nightlife and in many cases wealthy residents are factors behind it having the most reported crimes in London. Some of the most popular sights in London are located in Westminster: the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Oxford Street, Regent Street, Buckingham Palace and St James's Palace. Westminster is also home to the highest crime rate in London, with theft being the most common. Over the period, 178,685 cases out of 304,681 in the borough were theft related. This is followed by 42,874 violence against the person cases and 11,307 drug offences. The borough is showing no signs of improving – crimes have been increasing non-stop since September 2024. Criminals are thought to be drawn to the area to prey on its many tourists, often well-off residents and the multitude of people enjoying its varied nightlife. The crime rate for the borough is 1,169.7 per 1,000 people. Camden has the second highest number of crimes. A popular destination for tourists, Camden is well known for its markets, fashion, culture and music venues as well as the British Museum and London Zoo. Camden also has one of the highest rates of crime in London, particularly theft, violence against the person and vehicle offences. Theft was the number one crime, making up 64,000 cases out of the total 144,495 reported crimes in the borough. The crime rate for Camden is 582.6 per 1,000 people. Kensington and Chelsea is the most populous borough in London, despite being the smallest. And the rate of crime is high, with theft and violence against the person accounting for the top two offences. The crime rate in Kensington and Chelsea is 536.9 per 1,000 people. The borough is wealthy making it more attractive to potential criminals.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/crime-london-manchester-met-police-sadiq-khan-andy-burnham-b1225552.html> - London’s crime rate may be rising – but mayor Sir Sadiq Khan claims the capital is not the worst in the country. But is he correct? In short: yes – though it also depends which crimes are compared. Analysis of the latest official crime statistics by The Standard supports the mayor’s assertion – and shows that Greater Manchester has a higher overall crime rate than London. There are far more crimes reported in London than in Manchester – 957,481 in the year to December 2024 in the capital, compared with 323,954 in Greater Manchester. And crime is growing in London – there were an extra 24,194 offences in 2024, an increase of 2.6 per cent – but falling in Manchester, down eight per cent or 31,257 offences. The Met police is expected to lose about 1,700 officers and civilian staff due to the need to make budget cuts. A Greater Manchester police spokeswoman said that crime was falling across its region. This was backed up by the ONS data – its crime rate of 109.9 crimes per 1,000 residents was down on 122 per 1,000 residents recorded in 2023. In contrast, London’s total crime rate has risen from 105.3 to 107 over the same period. The Greater Manchester Police spokeswoman said: “Crime is actually falling here because of proactive approach of officers and staff increasing a problem solving approach to fighting crime, and our positive outcome rates are continuing to rise.” Greater Manchester Police said total crime levels had fallen by 7.2 per cent year on year – meaning 25,000 fewer crimes and 18,735 fewer victims. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority said its homicide rates, knife crime and hospital admissions due to assault by a sharp object were lower than in London. Andy Burnham, the Labour mayor of Greater Manchester, last month extended the contract of Greater Manchester chief constable Stephen Watson until May 2028. Both Greater Manchester police and the Met police have come out of special measures. Mr Burnham said: “Greater Manchester Police has been transformed under Stephen Watson’s leadership. Because of his proactive, back-to-basics approach, and his strong commitment to neighbourhood policing, crime is down across the board and more criminals are being brought to justice.” A spokesperson for Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) said: “In recent years Greater Manchester Police has made significant progress in recording more crime and public confidence in the force has risen. Under the leadership of Chief Constable Stephen Watson, Greater Manchester’s crime rates have fallen. Total crime is down eight per cent in the last year, violence against the person down seven per cent, robbery down four per cent, theft offences down 11 per cent.”
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/london-boroughs-lowest-crime-rates-richmond-kingston-sutton-merton-b1206311.html> - Crime statistics released by the Metropolitan police have revealed the safest boroughs in terms of crime across London in 2024. The Metropolitan Police’s Connect system allows the force to break down crimes into categories, such as hate crime, domestic abuse, knife crime and gun incidents, as well as where they happened. The data is updated regularly and every month stats will be released showing the level of incidents around the capital. The most recent data for December shows there were 77,981 offences over the month – 2 per cent more than for the same period in 2023. The most common offence across the capital was theft, with 27,730 recorded incidents. Second was violence against the person – with 19,526 offences, followed by 7,489 vehicle offences. This was followed by burglary on 4,875; arson and criminal damage on 4,265, public order offences totalling 4,086 and drug offences on 3,952. Next on the list was robbery on 2,773, followed by sexual offences on 2,027. For 2024 as a whole, there were 948,491 offences recorded. People are now able to click on their borough and find out the crime stats, including the number and type of offences, what were the most commonly reported offences and how their borough compares with others. Here is a breakdown of some of the data. Which London borough was the safest in 2024? The data is broken down into the borough name, the number of offences and then the number of offences per 1,000 of the population. The information per 1,000 of the population has been given so boroughs can be compared. Bigger boroughs will be likely to have a higher number of crimes as their population is greater, so this statistic makes it possible to compare boroughs with each other. They rank as follows. 1. Richmond upon Thames Residents of Richmond upon Thames enjoy the highest level of personal safety in London. The borough was the safest in 2024, with 12,113 incidents recorded by police – working out at 60.7 offences per 1,000 of the population. Of these stats, 3,231 were for theft, 3,011 were for violence against a person and 1,795 were for vehicle crimes. There were 1,012 reports of burglary and 949 of arson and criminal damage. 2. Kingston upon Thames Kingston upon Thames was the second safest borough in London in 2024. More than half of crimes in Kingston upon Thames were theft or violence against the person. There were 11,155 offences reported to police, working out at 62.1 offences per 1,000 of the population. Theft was again the most common offence reported on 3,526, followed by violence against a person on 3,129 offences reported. Arson and criminal damage were reported 980 times, while drug offences were reported 523 times.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crime_in_London> - Crime in London encompasses a wide range of criminal activities, including violent crimes such as gun and knife offences, property crimes like theft and burglary, and drug-related crimes. Over the years, London has experienced fluctuations in crime rates, with certain periods